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SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

- [11. Mideast](#)
- [12. France-US Relations](#)

Key stories in the media:

Leading media quoted PM Ehud Olmert as saying on Monday, in a

briefing for Russian-language media outlets in Israel: "I have a lot of respect for the Syrian leader and for Syrian policy. They have internal problems, but we have no reason to rule out dialogue with Syria." He was further quoted as saying: "As I have said in the past, we want to make peace with everyone. If the conditions ripen, we are ready to make peace with Syria, with no preconditions and no ultimate demands." Yediot quoted Israeli diplomatic sources as saying that Olmert's comments were carefully chosen and that they were intended to assuage Bashar Assad. Ha'aretz led with a report that on Monday Israeli academics told the newspaper, based on their conversation with a senior US official, that the US is opposed to Syria attending Washington's regional peace summit in November. The academics were quoted as saying that the official described Syria as a "vicious, brutal regime allied to Iran strategically," which subscribes to "the most barbaric anti-Semitic views."

The Jerusalem Post reported that Israeli officials are treating Iran's latest claims that it has 600 Shihab-3 missiles aimed at targets throughout the country the same way it treated Teheran's claims last month to have crossed a key nuclear threshold: by listening carefully, but not believing everything they hear. The Jerusalem Post quoted PM Olmert as saying at the briefing with the Russian-language media that Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was trying to frighten the world into thinking that it was "too late" to get the Iranians to stop their nuclear march. Olmert was quoted as saying that Israel was not afraid of the situation in Iran: "We are concerned, but we don't have to lose our head."

The Jerusalem Post quoted Israeli and US officials as saying on Monday that Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice will not have a three-way meeting with PM Olmert and PA President Mahmoud Abbas during her upcoming visit. The Jerusalem Post and Israel Radio said that the US is pushing Israeli and Palestinian leaders toward an agreement this year that would put both sides on record on even small areas of accord but that probably would fall short of a full framework for peace. The Jerusalem Post's Web site and Israel Radio quoted State Department spokesman Sean McCormack as saying on Monday: "It is to help them start to bridge any differences across a whole wide range of issues" and capitalize on areas of agreement. "I don't expect any writing of anything down to happen on this trip," McCormack was quoted as saying, pointing to the formation of lower-level committees to do any detailed drafting of an eventual joint statement or agreement. The Jerusalem Post's Web site and Israel Radio quoted Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs as saying that Olmert and Abbas are considering a joint document that would give more structure to a recent series of one-on-one talks and other contacts. "This is a very important moment and we think that we can make some progress here," Welch was quoted as saying. He added: "For the first time here in quite some time I really do feel that there is an opportunity [and] with a little hard work -- and that may take quite a bit of time -- we can get it in a way that looks a little bit better." Ha'aretz reported that Secretary Rice is interested in being updated on the Olmert-Abbas talks before the US forms its view on the agenda of the planned international meeting. The Jerusalem Post wrote that Secretary Rice faces a "tall order" on her visit to the region.

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Ha'aretz quoted an Israeli defense source as saying on Monday that Israel will alleviate traffic restrictions in the West Bank slowly and gradually if the security situation allows it. "We will start by removing 10 to 20 roadblocks in the periphery, gradually and prudently," the source was quoted as saying. Ha'aretz printed a Reuters story citing a British government report as saying that the Gaza blockade is the biggest obstacle to PA growth. Ha'aretz also cited a new World Bank report warning that there can be no peace and economic recovery in the PA without including the Gaza Strip.

Former US ambassador to the UN John Bolton was quoted as saying in an interview with Yediot that North Korean scientists were apparently killed in the attack on Syria and that Iran was likely to be involved in the bombed nuclear facility. Bolton was further quoted as saying that the Israeli raid was a clear message that Israel has the right to defend itself.

Leading media reported that on Monday in Ramallah a 16-year-old Palestinian was killed by IDF gunfire. The media quoted the IDF as

saying that he was armed -- a claim refuted by Palestinians.

All media reported that MK Zehava Gal-On, the head of Meretz's Knesset faction, has asked Attorney-General Menachem Mazuz to make PM Olmert brief the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee about the operation in Syria.

Yediot and other media reported that the government will set up a commission to check the damage caused to Palestinian civilians by the July 2002 bombardment of a Gaza building that killed Hamas leader Salah Shehadeh.

Ha'aretz reported that US officials have recently complained that Israeli immigration authorities harass American citizens of Arab origin at Israeli border crossings.

Maariv reported that in a recently published book, Washington Post diplomatic correspondent Glenn Kessler revealed that Secretary Rice co-owned a home and shared a line of credit with another woman.

Yediot presented the results of a Mina Zemach (Dahaf Institute) poll that found that PM Olmert's popularity has grown since the "raid in Syria":

- "How do you view Ehud Olmert's performance as PM?" Good: 35 percent (25 percent two weeks ago); bad: 63 percent (75 percent two weeks ago); 2 percent were undecided.

- "According to foreign reports, Israel raided nuclear targets in Syria. Do you support or oppose the operation?" Support: 78 percent; oppose: 10 percent; 12 percent were undecided.

- "Following the IDF operation, do you believe chances of a war with Syria have increased or decreased?" Unchanged: 51 percent; increased: 32 percent; decreased: 13 percent; 4 percent were undecided.

- "Has the operation changed your view of PM Olmert?" No change: 70 percent; it is better: 20 percent; it is worse: 6 percent; 4 percent were undecided.

I1. Mideast:

Summary:

Diplomatic correspondent Herb Keinon wrote on page one of the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post: "The alleged connection to North Korea makes Syria vulnerable. The question is whether the world will seize the moment." The independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized: "IDF Intelligence Chief Amos Yadlin's statement that Israel has restored its deterrence capabilities was premature."

Moshe Karif, a founder of the Mizrahi Democratic Rainbow Coalition, a social justice NGO among Mizrahi Jews (Jews from Arab and Muslim lands and the East) in Israel, wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "The Jews from Arab countries ... lost their entire world in one fell stroke..... A transparent public administration ought to be set up [in Israel] to map the Jewish property in Arab countries."

Block Quotes:

I1. "There's a Reason World Is Quiet on Alleged IAF Strike"

Diplomatic correspondent Herb Keinon wrote on page one of the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post (9/18): "Damascus, it is safe to assume will want to shrug off a North Korean image and present itself as a responsible player on the international scene. It has even expressed interest in coming to the international Middle East meeting that the US is planning later this year. The allegations of a North Korea-Syrian connection could make the time ripe, therefore for Israel to push the world to place certain conditions on Syria's being accepted back into the international fold. . The conditions are obvious. And ones that Israel has been demanding -- without any success at all -- for years: kicking the terrorist organizations out of Damascus, first and foremost Hamas and its leader Khaled Mashal, and an end to the support and the

supply of weapons to Hizbullah. In the past Syria has just ignored these calls. But now, in order to avoid being seen as North Korea's kid brother, it may have no choice but to pay a little attention. The alleged connection to North Korea makes Syria vulnerable. The question is whether the world will seize the moment."

II. "It Takes Time to Restore Deterrence"

The independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized (9/18): "IDF Intelligence Chief Amos Yadlin's statement that Israel has restored its deterrence capabilities was premature. Deterrence is a fine and encouraging word, but it is difficult to measure. It is much easier to detect and measure complacency and self-satisfaction.... Excessive self-satisfaction has led Israel's past governments to numerous failures. It has made the nation's leadership think time is working in our favor. It has persuaded our leaders to miss out on opportunities, to wantonly set up settlements in areas which were supposed to serve as bargaining chips. It compelled Jerusalem to postpone giving back the West Bank to Jordan's King Hussein when he still wanted it back. Every time Israel relishes in its military might, we must remind ourselves of its limits and its limitations. Let us hope that Yadlin's words were taken out of full context, and that if a successful action was indeed carried out in Syria, it would not make anyone think that the weakness Israel had demonstrated in the days of the Second Lebanon War has been erased."

III. "Jewish Property in Arab Countries"

Moshe Karif, a founder of the Mizrahi Democratic Rainbow Coalition, a social justice NGO among Mizrahi Jews (Jews from Arab and Muslim lands and the East) in Israel, wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (9/18): "Compensation of the Palestinian refugees is one of the central issues which has to be solved for an historic reconciliation between us and the Palestinians. But in the same breath it must be recalled that the Jews left behind them, in Arab countries, assets in the billions, and nobody even thinks of paying that debt. The Jews from Arab countries, many of whom came here ... lost their entire world in one fell stroke.... The young State of Israel could not believe the stories of the great wealth that had been left behind. On the rare occasions on which attention was given to the issue of the Jewish property in the Arab countries, this was not for the purpose of compensating the immigrants from Tunis, Morocco or Iraq, but in order to offset, in a cynical manner, the Jewish property that had been left there against the Palestinian property that was left here.... Estimates of the value of Jewish property left behind range from USD 10 to 30 billion. Others claim that the Jewish property left in Iraq is worth USD 100 million and the property in Egypt USD 60 million. Now, when Saudi Arabia wishes to settle once and for all the major questions, this is the time to discuss also a solution for the question of Jewish property in Arab countries. Prime Minister Ehud Olmert has an opportunity to put right the decades-long injustice to the periphery of Israeli society, which is populated by Jews from Arab countries, their children and their grandchildren. A transparent public administration ought to be set up to map the Jewish property in Arab countries. Teams should be set up to gather information from the generation of the grandparents who are still among us and can prove that they own the properties. After the cartographical stage, the findings should be submitted to whoever really wants to put an end to the conflict here. We will talk to them in the fall about everything, about the property of the Jews and the Palestinians. We will not deduct one from the other. We will build, at long last, the infrastructure which those who left their property behind, here and there, truly deserve."

¶2. France-US Relations:

Summary:

Columnist and French politics expert Daniel Ben Simon wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "It is no accident that Sarkozy appointed [Bernard Kouchner] as his foreign minister -- the right-wing man and the left-winger who have discovered that they view the world through the same eyes."

Block Quotes:

"France Aligns Itself with Bush"

Columnist and French politics expert Daniel Ben Simon wrote in the independent, left-leaning *Ha'aretz* (9/18): "As regards Iran, [Bernard Kouchner], the man of the Left who was appointed Foreign Minister in a right-wing government, expressed exactly what was on his mind.... There is a change in France's policy not only regarding Iran but also in other arenas. Even before spending his summer vacation in the US, Sarkozy tightened the connection with that country.... [Kouchner's visit to Baghdad] would have been unthinkable under Chirac's regime.... Despite being a man of the Left, Kouchner did not condemn the US invasion [of Iraq] and is even considered a pro-American who did not hesitate to express support for a world under American hegemony. It is no accident that Sarkozy appointed him as his foreign minister -- the right-wing man and the left-winger who have discovered that they view the world through the same eyes."

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